

# A Tale of Two Prison Inmates

By ERNIE COX

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James Reece, once dubbed Alameda County's "one-man crime wave," now 26 years old and has been a "known psychotic" since age 14. Superior Court Judge George W. Phillips.

Reece has been under various sorts of police and court supervision for 12 years and — unbelievably — has been "turned loose time after time to commit more crimes," said the judge.

He is so violent he had to be tried under heavy sedation before a jury in Phillips' court. The jury recently convicted him of a string of nine felonies including two counts of kidnap, three robberies, two burglaries and two escapes.

That series of crimes extended over a year and culminated in his capture in Marin County where he smashed up a stolen car while pursuing San Francisco topless dancer Yvonne D'Angers.

At the time he started the swath of crime in 1966, he was free on bail on a charge of raping a University of California coed in Berkeley and was on probation for a 1964 robbery.

Reece, who once worked as a baker in Oakland, has had extensive psychiatric counseling at Atascadero State Hospital over the last three or four years.

The chances of Reece ever becoming a peaceful, law-abiding and productive citizen are exceedingly remote, according to Judge Phillips. Doctors have said regular doses of sedation are as essential for his well-being as insulin is for a diabetic.

On the other hand, Leonard C. Rideout, now 21, has been a compulsive burglar since about age 9. He estimates he has committed 250 burglaries — driven by some irrational force beyond his understanding. As far as is known, he has never committed a crime of violence.

During his young life he has been sent to the California Youth Authority on five different occasions. Both he and relatives asked the CYA on numerous occasions to provide psychiatric help. It was never done.

He is now in state prison and, despite the pleadings of Judge Phillips and a court-appointed psychiatrist, Dr. Donald T. Lunde of the Stanford University Medical School, it does not appear likely he will get the kind of help he needs.

What would be his chances of recovery with the right kind of psychiatric treatment? Dr. Lunde, in recommending that prison authorities send him to Atascadero, said in part:

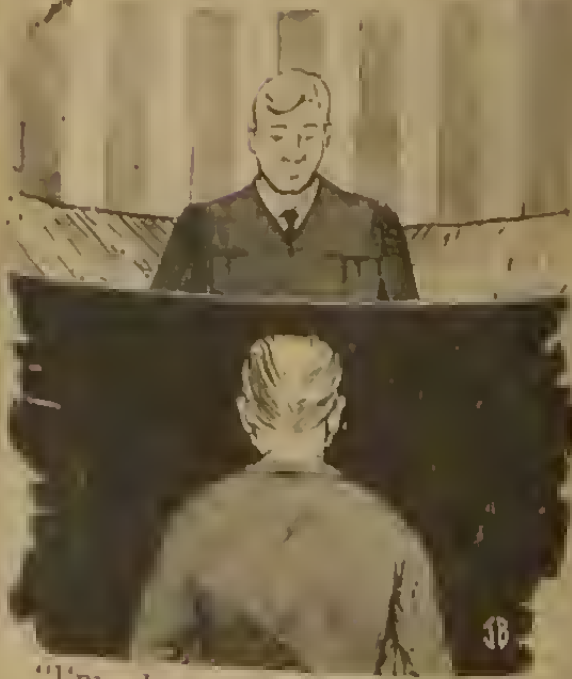
"This course of action (long term psychiatric treatment) would fulfill two important functions. First of all, it would greatly decrease the probability that this man will continue to perform anti-social acts and that he might go on to become a useful and productive member of society. He certainly has that potential."

"In addition, this disposition would satisfy Mr. Rideout's request for treatment which I think is made with a sincere intention on his part to change the pattern of living . . . which has proved dissatisfying to him and a burden to society."

Judge Phillips, in sending Rideout to the Vacaville Medical Facility, sent letters to the prison authorities and phoned them, urging that the young interior decorator and one-time night club singer be sent to Atascadero. This was followed up with phone calls from Dr. Lunde and the county probation department. The district attorney concurred in the recommendation.

Reports came back to Judge Phillips: J. E. Bergmann, a correctional counselor, agreed Rideout needed psychiatric help. Prison psychiatrists said he needed treatment.

But Bergman added that Vacaville guards recommended Rideout be transferred to San Quentin "for a period of stabilization, and after he has demonstrated stability and willingness to participate in the program, he could be considered for placement in group therapy."



"I'm deeply discouraged," Dr. Lunde told The Tribune. "This happens in most cases. I've used this classic case in discussions with law students at Stanford Law School."

"Prisons use group therapy. Rideout needs intensive psychiatric treatment — five hours a week with doctors. There is no place in prison where he can get this."

Lunde added, "I'm appalled at how little the public knows about what happens to people in jails or in prisons. Few people ever visit them."

Judge Phillips was in a similar state of despair. "Here we have the ludicrous situation where prison guards apparently are deciding the fate of this man. Evidently they are not going to let go of him until he straightens up in accordance with their standards. This is the old punitive approach."

(Rideout is still in Vacaville at this time.)

The stark contrast between the cases of Reece and Rideout seems to prove once again: the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Reece in his court appearances has overturned tables, been gogged and shackled, fought jailers and deputies, screamed at judges, and once become so violent it took eight bailiffs to shackle him and carry him back to the courthouse jail.

Rideout, on the other hand, admitted his crimes and cooperated with police in clearing up numerous unsolved

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burglaries. His burglaries often were clumsily performed, in broad daylight, with no attempt to hide his fingerprints. Often he was chased by householders. He was intelligent enough to tell Dr. Lunde he thought he had some childish need to be caught and punished.

Reece's 1966 crime spree started with the holdup of a Hayward area pharmacy that resulted in a running gunfight with a cordon of private citizens, police and sheriff's deputies. During the chase he held two men hostage at gunpoint, including Sheriff's Deputy James Sutton. Fifteen shots were exchanged during the chase.

Before that, Reece already had spent two years at Atascadero Hospital undergoing psychiatric treatment after a 1964 Oakland burglary and robbery.

Rideout, who seldom took much of value in his burglaries, told how he happened to burglarize a Berkeley home one April afternoon in 1969. He was dressed in a black silk suit and white silk shirt, with about an hour to kill before rehearsing as a singer with a nightclub band.

It was a nice day and he went for a short walk — a strikingly handsome figure in his silks. He insisted he had no thought of committing a burglary, but suddenly he began to feel "vibrations coming from a certain house."

He entered and began rummaging around, finding \$2 in a woman's purse in the bedroom, before a man came in from the back yard and chased him out and down the street for several blocks. Rideout said during the chase he thought the situation was "ridiculous"

and couldn't understand why he had entered the home. He didn't need money — he never burglarized for money. He was not a drug user. He never carried a weapon.

Reece, just a month after his arrest in 1966 on the robbery and kidnapping charges, tried to escape outside the courthouse and was shot in the leg by a sheriff's deputy. He was taken to Highland Hospital and a month later, with the leg mending and a deputy sitting outside his second floor room, Reece slid down a blanket to the ground and hobbled five blocks down the street where he climbed into an apartment house through a bathroom window. He escaped with \$58 before a frightened occupant could call police.

It was another month before authorities caught up with Reece and nabbed him as he was trying to cross the border into Mexico at Tijuana. In his city jail cell in San Diego a few days later Reece slashed his left arm with a broken light bulb and was found bleeding and unconscious. He was charged with robbing two San Diego drug stores of more than \$1,000.

In the numerous amateurish burglaries committed by Rideout, he usually took whatever cash he could find and easily-pawned items such as tape recorders. He signed pawn tickets with his own name, making it easier to trace the item to the thief. Once he stole a checkbook, took it to the bank where

the owner was known, and attempted to cash a check — posing as the owner of the checkbook.

He once told Dr. Lunde he often remembered a magazine cartoon in which an arrested burglar said, "The reason I am always stealing is that I am trying to fulfill a childhood fantasy that people want to give me presents."

Dr. Lunde thinks the "childhood fantasy" may be part of the sad young man's problem. The sensitive and intelligent youth was reared by a family friend, scarcely knew his own mother and father. In his search for the missing "mother figure," says Dr. Lunde, Rideout once married a woman six years his senior, a probation officer, a strong and authoritarian figure. The marriage lasted one year but during that time Rideout attended junior college and committed no burglaries.

After the marriage broke up, he started living with a 40-year-old divorced mother of three but the relationship didn't last. The woman was less authoritarian than his ex-wife. Rideout returned to committing burglaries.

In San Diego, James Reece was ordered to Patten State Hospital where he was held until May, 1967, then adjudged sufficiently sane to stand trial. The judge there freed him of the robbery charges, apparently on the ground that he was insane at the time he committed the crimes.

Through an administrative bobble, the judge was not informed of pending charges against Reece in Alameda County, so Reece was set free.

His next escapade came a month later when, in a stolen car, he pursued Miss D'Angers as she drove away from a San Francisco night spot in her red Cadillac convertible. In a dead-end street smashup, Reece was critically injured and landed in Marin General Hospital.

Reece gave authorities a fictitious name and address, but Alameda County sheriff's deputies identified him a day later through a tattooed cross and initial "J" on his left forearm.

By this time Reece faced a variety of charges from the Hayward "escape," rape charges in Berkeley, robbery and burglary and escape charges in Oakland. Marin County charges

stemming from the chase after Miss D'Angers, and, pending in San Diego, additional charges of robbery, burglary and firearms possession.

In June, 1967, the Alameda County Grand Jury indicted Reece on 11 felony counts. In July, Reece, represented by the public defender, entered pleas of innocent and innocent by reason of insanity. Two psychiatrists were duly appointed by the court to examine Reece once again. But the psychiatrists differed.

Dr. Walter Rapaport, one time director of Agnews State Hospital, declared Reece was putting on an act to avoid conviction. He agreed with then Assistant District Attorney Lowell Jensen's characterization of Reece's behavior as the "Brer Rabbit Syndrome" or "don't throw me in the briar patch."

Dr. William McGaughey, the other court-appointed psychiatrist, said he thought Reece was not competent to understand the proceedings against him and "should be in a hospital."

A trial had to be interrupted because of Reece's violent physical and verbal outbursts before Superior Court Judge Redmond C. Staots. Finally Reece slashed his left arm with an ash tray in jail, more psychiatric examinations were conducted and eventually Judge Staots committed him to Atascadero as insane after a week-long performance which included a shouting

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motel with the judge, wrestling with bailiffs and upsetting counsel tables.

In mid-1970 psychiatrists at Atascadero decided Reece was recovered sufficiently to stand trial. They sent him back to Oakland with a supply of tranquilizers but in May when he again appeared before Judge Staots he flew into a rage of such violence it took eight bailiffs to subdue him. Staots sentenced him to state prison on revoked probation for a 1964 robbery.

The case eventually ended up before Judge Phillips who ordered another psychiatric examination to determine if Reece could be tried for the Hayward crime spree while under heavy sedation — believed to be the first time such a question has been raised in California law.

Dr. Lunde and Dr. Bert S. Koppell, also of the Stanford Medical School, found Reece capable of standing trial.

A jury on Dec. 11, 1970, found Reece guilty on nine felony counts. The same jury of six men and six women found Reece sane on Dec. 22.

When he next appeared before Judge Phillips Jan. 18 for sentencing to a life term in state prison, Reece was heavily shackled and handcuffed. Despite the restraints, the 230-pound prisoner flew into another rage, knocked aside two bailiffs, vomited, and finally lapsed into unconsciousness as eight bailiffs held him on the floor.

The sentencing had to be halted and Judge Phillips asked Dr. Lunde to make yet another psychiatric examination to determine if Reece is able to understand the sentencing procedure. He finally was sentenced to life imprisonment on Jan. 21.

Meanwhile, Leonard Rideout, the docile and bewildered burglar, remains in Vacaville Medical Facility where prison authorities say he is undergoing "group therapy," which Dr. Lunde considers of doubtful efficacy in his case.

Prisoner sent to Atascadero, plans for sending him to Atascadero, the only place, according to Dr. Lunde, where he could get the kind of treatment he needs.

If he remains placid and polite he will be paroled on April 9, 1972 — presumably "rehabilitated" — but don't bet on it.